

Message Text

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PAGE 01 GEORGE 01568 061126Z

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00

DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 /064 W

----- 030560

R 051945Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3222

INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L GEORGETOWN 1568

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, GY, SU, CU

SUBJECT: SOVIET/CUBAN ACTIONS CAUSE FRICTION

SUMMARY: A SERIES OF IRRITATIONS AND FRICTIONS RECENTLY HAVE MARRED RELATIONS BETWEEN THE GOG AND THE CUBANS AND RUSSIANS. GUYANESE OFFICIALS ARE GRUMBLING INPRIVATE ABOUT RUSSIAN HEAVY-HANDEDNESS AND CUBAN ARROGANCE. AN INCIDENT INVOLVING UNCLEARED TRAVEL GRANTS TO THE USSR GOT CRITICAL COVERAGE OF SOVIET ACTIVITIES IN GOG-CONTROLLED PRESS. FONMIN WILLS COMPLAINED TO ME THAT THE RUSSIANS AND CUBANS WERE SIMILAR TO THE AMERICANS IN THAT THEY COULD NOT UNDERSTAND THAT GUYANA'S DECISION TO ORGANIZE A SOCIALIST ECONOMY DID NOT SIGNIFY ALIGNMENT TO THE SOVIET UNION. THE FRICTION SIGNALS NO DISRUPTION IN GOG RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIETS AND CUBANS, BUT, GIVEN THE BEHAVIOR PATTERN OF THE TWO NATION'S MISSIONS HERE, THE FRICTIONS WILL CONTINUE AND PROBABLY INCREASE. BURNHAM IS TORN BETWEEN HIS FEAR SOVIETS WILL STRENGTHEN CHEDDI JAGAN'S POLITICAL FORTUNES AND WEAKEN BURNHAM'S RELATIVE POWER, AND HIS HOPE THAT THE SOVIETS WILL PARTICIPATE IN FINANCING THE GOG'S MUCH-DESIRED UPPER MAZARUNI HYDRO-ELECTRIC PROJECT. END SUMMARY.

1. AMID GENERALLY FAVORABLE TREATMENT OF THINGS RUSSIAN AND CUBAN IN THE PRESS AND IN PUBLIC SPEECHES OF GOG OFFICIALS, AN UNDER-CURRENT OF CONCERN AND A DISPLEASURE IS GROWING AMONG GOG OFFICIALS, CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 GEORGE 01568 061126Z

INCLUDING PRIME MINISTER BURNHAM, OVER CERTAIN ACTIONS AND BEHAVIOR

OF THE SOVIETS AND THE CUBANS. WE HAVE RECEIVED REPORTS OF AND HAVE HEARD GOG OFFICIALS GRUMBLING ABOUT CUBAN AND SOVIET ACTIONS. BURNHAM REPORTEDLY HAS EXPRESSED HIS DISPLEASURE IN CABINET MEETINGS. FONMIN WILLS TOLD ME JULY 29 THAT BURNHAM WOULD CALLIN THE CUBAN AMBASSADOR TO DISCUSS SOME UNSPECIFIED "UNPLEASANT THINGS".

2. SOME RECENT INCIDENTS ILLUSTRATIVE OF FRICTION BETWEEN CUBANS AND SOVIETS AND THE GUYANESE ARE DESCRIBED BELOW.

(A) THE CUBAN AMBASSADOR REQUESTED GOG FOREIGN MINISTRY TO ARRANGE FOR HIM TO VISIT SURINAM AND TO INSTRUCT GUYANA'S EMBASSY IN PARAMARIBO TO ARRANGE HIS APPOINTMENTS WITH SURINAMESE LEADERS. THE FOREIGN MINISTRY'S REFUSAL WAS MET WITH ANGER BY THE CUBAN AMBASSADOR.

(B) GUYANESE OFFICIALS COMPLAIN THAT GROUPS OF 20-30 CUBANS-- SOMETIMES GOC OFFICIALS-- APPEAR AT GUYANA'S EMBASSY IN HAVANA WITHOUT PRIOR NOTIFICATION TO DEMAND VISAS WITHOUT INFORMING GUYANESE CONSULS OF THE PURPOSE OF THEIR PROPOSED VISIT.

(C) PERSONNEL OF THE CUBAN EMBASSY HERE REPORTEDLY HAVE BECOME INVOLVED IN FIGHTS WITH GUYANESE. THE MOST RECENT KNOWN INCIDENT OCCURRED ON THE NIGHT OF JULY 24 WHEN, DURING AN ALTERCATION OVER A WOMAN AT THE PEGASUS HOTEL, A CUBAN EMBASSY EMPLOYEE PULLED A PISTOL FROM UNDER HIS JACKET. HE WAS RESTRAINED FROM USING IT BY ANOTHER CUBAN.

(D) FIVE MEMBERS OF THE PEOPLES PROGRESSIVE PARTY (PPP) WERE PREVENTED BY IMMIGRATION OFFICIALS FROM DEPARTING ON A BRITISH AIRWAYS FLIGHT JULY 30. THE GROUP WAS ENROUTE TO THE USSR ON A STUDY TOUR FINANCED BY THE SOVIET GOVT. NEITHER THE PPP GROUP NOR THE SOVIET EMBASSY HERE HAD CLEARED THE TRAVEL GRANTS WITH THE GOG. THAT SUCH CLEARANCE WOULD BE OBTAINED WAS REPORTEDLY A PART OF THE UNDERSTANDING REACHED WHEN THE GOG AGREED TO ACCREDIT THE USSR'S RESIDENT AMBASSADOR. THIS INCIDENT WAS MADE PUBLIC IN A CHRONICLE ARTICLE CRITICAL OF THE SOVIET EMBASSY'S FAILURE TO CONSULT WITH THE GOG.

3. THESE INCIDENTS ABOVE DO NOT SIGNAL A MAJOR DISRUPTION
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PAGE 03 GEORGE 01568 061126Z

OF THE GOG'S RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIETS AND THE CUBANS. GIVEN THE GENERAL TENDENCY OF THE SOVIETS TO BE HEAVY-HANDED AND OF THE CUBANS TO BE ILL-MANNERED AND ARROGANT, HOWEVER, WE SUSPECT THAT THE FRICTION IN THE RELATIONSHIP WILL INCREASE.

4. FOREIGN MINISTER WILLS, DURING A MEETING WITH ME JULY 29, COMPLAINED OF SOVIET AND CUBAN RIGIDITY AND ARROGANCE. HE ALSO COMMENTED THAT THE RUSSIANS, CUBANS AND AMERICANS WERE ALIKE IN THAT

THEY HAD DIFFICULTY UNDERSTANDING THAT GUYANA'S DECISION TO ORGANIZE ITS ECONOMY ALONG SOCIALIST LINES DID NOT AT ALL MEAN THAT GUYANA WOULD BECOME A PART OF THE SOCIALIST BLOC. THE GOG, HE SAID, INTENDED TO MAINTAIN THE MAXIMUM INDEPENDENCE POSSIBLE FOR A SMALL NON-ALIGNED NATION.

5. THE ACTING CANADIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER TOLD ME AUGUST 3 HE HAD A RELIABLE REPORT THAT CASTRO HAD TOLD THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN HAVANA THE RUSSIANS SHOULD NOT EXPECT BURNHAM TO ALIGN GUYANA WITH THE SOVIETS ANYMORE THAN THE AMERICANS COULD EXPECT BURNHAM'S ALLEGIANCE. UPON LEARNING OF CASTRO'S WARNING TO THE SOVIETS, BURNHAM REPORTEDLY SHOWED ANNOYANCE.

6. COMMENT: BURNHAM IS FACING A DILEMMA IN HIS RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIETS AND THE CUBANS. ON THE ONE HAND HE REPORTEDLY FEARS THAT ANY SIZEABLE SOVIET AND/OR CUBAN PRESENCE IN GUYANA WOULD LEAD TO AN INCREASE IN JAGAN'S RESOURCES AND INFLUENCE AT THE EXPENSE OF HIS OWN POWER.

ON THE OTHER HAND, HE STILL HOPES THAT THE SOVIET UNION WILL HELP IN FINANCING THE UPPER MAZARUNI HYDRO-ELECTRIC PROJECT AND DOES NOT WANT TO TURN THE SOVIETS OFF AT THIS TIME
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 05 AUG 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: MartinML
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976GEORGE01568
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760303-0749
From: GEORGETOWN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760881/aaaactlp.tel
Line Count: 137
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: MartinML
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <10 MAY 2004 by ElyME>; APPROVED <01 SEP 2004 by MartinML>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SOVIET/CUBAN ACTIONS CAUSE FRICTION SUMMARY: A SERIES OF IRRITATIONS AND FRICTIONS RECENTLY HAVE MARRED RELATIONS BETWEEN THE GOG AND THE CUBANS AND RUSSI
TAGS: PFOR, GY, UR, CU
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006